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**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE EVALUATIONS
OF NARRATIVES IN OFFICER PERFORMANCE RATINGS**

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**NAVY PERSONNEL RESEARCH
AND
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San Diego, California 92152**



**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE EVALUATIONS OF NARRATIVES
IN OFFICER PERFORMANCE RATINGS**

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Men's evaluations were significantly longer than the were women's, contained more comments about their combat potential and impact on the Navy, contained more recommendations for future assignments, and used different words to describe their behavior. Men were seen as more qualified, logical, dynamic, mature, and aggressive than were women. Male officers were described as being effective in training others and physically fit, possessing the Navy image, having supportive wives, and improving their commands. Female officers, more so than males, were described as supporting equal opportunity, appearing impeccable in uniform, and being an asset to their commands. Using the significant gender differences uncovered in the analyses, two pseudo-narratives were written without any gender-identifying pronouns--one describing a female lieutenant and the other, a male lieutenant. Mid-level officers, who were asked to judge the promotability of the two pseudo-lieutenants, overwhelmingly chose the man.

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FOREWORD

This study was performed under task area RF63.521.804.021, work unit 03.03 (Personnel Assimilation and Supervision). It was initiated because a change in the federal law resulted in female and male officers being evaluated by the same selection board, even though women have been prevented from holding many assignments considered important to officer career development. For this reason, equity in evaluating the performance of officers of each gender became a critical issue that needed to be investigated. Research results are intended for the use of those responsible for ensuring equality of opportunity of Navy personnel and those concerned with the reliability of the officer evaluation system.

The cooperation of Mr. Bruce Herman, of the Naval Military Personnel Command (NMPC-32), is gratefully acknowledged.

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SUMMARY

Problem

Since the passage of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act in 1981, women and men have been evaluated by the same selection board. For the first time, female officers are competing with male officers for promotions, even though they have been restricted by law from holding many assignments considered important to male officer career development such as sea duty. Thus, the issue of gender differences in the evaluation of officer performance needs to be addressed.

Objective

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there are gender differences in the comments section (narrative) of the Reports on the Fitness of Officers (FitReps) prepared for female and male Navy officers. Since the quantitative information in evaluations is already being monitored by Navy management, this effort focused solely on narrative information.

Approach

The sample consisted of 239 unrestricted line (URL) officers (120 women and 119 men) who were being considered by a selection board for promotion to lieutenant commander. Information extracted from the most recent, regular FitRep narratives of these men and women was content analyzed. Statistical tests were applied to the lists of descriptors developed for each person. Finally, composite FitRep narratives were created, one representative of a male officer and the other of a female officer, leaving out all reference to gender. Several groups of mid-level officers were asked to review the narratives and to recommend only one of the "officers" for promotion.

Findings

1. Men's evaluations contained significantly more narrative material than did the women's. In particular, more comments were made concerning their potential performance in combat, the impact of their efforts on the Navy, and recommendations for their future assignments.

2. The actual descriptors used in the evaluations showed gender differences. Men were seen as more qualified, logical, dynamic, mature, and aggressive than were women. Men, more so than women, were reported to be effective in training others, have Navy characteristics, be concerned with physical fitness, have a supportive spouse, and improve unit readiness, facilities, and safety conditions of their commands. Women, more so than men, were described as being supportive of equal opportunity programs, impeccable in uniform, and an asset to their command.

3. Mid-level male officers, some of whom had sat on selection boards, reviewed the two pseudo-FitReps and overwhelmingly recommended the "male officer" for promotion to lieutenant commander.

Conclusions

Male and female URL officers are evaluated differently in the narrative section of the FitRep. These differences could profoundly affect women's career opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Conduct briefings for the officers in charge and teaching staff of Navy schools where officers are trained in personnel management on the potential biases that can be written into FitReps.

2. Write journal articles describing the findings for publications read by officers to reach and influence those who have already passed through the formal Navy training system.

3. Promulgate information about career paths for women officers in media that will attract the attention of all officers.

4. Until the results of these efforts have had the opportunity to affect the evaluations of women officers, selection boards should be advised regarding gender differences in FitRep narratives.

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

In the Navy, as in most organizations, formal performance evaluations play a crucial role in attaining increased status. For the individual, a good evaluation system may lead to monetary rewards and continued career development; for the organization, it may ensure that the most competent are advanced to positions of leadership and responsibility.

Many factors can preclude fairness and objectivity in an evaluation system. One is a poorly designed form that does not focus on important behaviors or requires too much subjective information. Another is inflated quantitative ratings and narrative material that indicate all ratees (except the patently incompetent) are the crème de la crème. A third factor is bias, either conscious or unconscious, that colors the beliefs and perceptions of raters and the manner in which they evaluate subordinates. Bias operates insidiously, denying both its victims and the organization the benefits of an honest assessment. While various groups can be the targets of bias, it is most frequently manifested against racial/ethnic minorities and women.

Although the armed forces are organizations with a majority of males in which male traits and behaviors are valued and rewarded, strong injunctions against discrimination and a fairly objective evaluation system have protected the interests of women in the military. Moreover, in the past, separate selection boards were formed to consider the records of female and male officers. Because women historically have been prevented from holding many assignments considered important to male officer career development, it was believed that women should not have to compete with men for promotions. Since September 1981, however, when the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) went into effect, female and male officers are evaluated by the same selection board. Board members are reminded that the career experiences of men and women necessarily differ and to base their selection decisions on performance factors. This practice poses a problem if the many performance evaluations reviewed in detail for each candidate reflect gender bias.

Background

Research on gender differences in performance evaluations is recent and yields fairly consistent results. Nieva and Gutek (1981), in their review of the literature addressing the evaluation of women's performance, cited 16 studies that reported pro-male bias. In many of these studies, subjects were asked to appraise sets of two protocols--one ascribed to a man, and the other, to a woman. Some of these protocols were applications for scholarships or jobs; others, samples of professional writing or artistic endeavor; and still others, scenarios of task-related behavior. In each study, the male protocol was judged to be better than the identical female one. On balance, the authors discussed four studies in which no gender difference was found and four exhibiting pro-female bias.

One determining factor in the reported cases of gender bias was sex-role incongruence; that is, both men and women appear to be penalized for performing in a manner considered inappropriate for members of their sex. Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Maracek and Pascale (1975) studied the social consequences of women behaving in an assertive, aggressive mode and men behaving in a passive, dependent manner. The results of three studies indicated that, when members of either sex deviate from expected behavioral norms, they are viewed as being unlikable and in poor psychological health. Behavior and personality traits considered appropriate for women, however, are sometimes incongruent with success in an organizational setting, particularly one in which male behavior has

become the norm. Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz (1972) identified 29 traits associated with typical male behavior; and 12, with typical female behavior. The masculine traits formed a "competency" cluster, which consisted of such descriptors as aggressive, independent, competitive, logical, and decisive. The feminine traits formed a "warmth-expressiveness" cluster, which consisted of such descriptors as talkative, tactful, expressive of feelings, and gentle. While both clusters have a positive affect, most employers value competency more highly than warmth. Nieva and Gutek (1981) also discussed studies in which the performance evaluations of men and women matched on level of competence varied. When the level was high, the women were discriminated against; when it was low, the women were favored.

Studies of gender bias in evaluating the performance of military personnel are rare. Mohr (1976) investigated potential gender bias in peer ratings of Army officers in their final week of a basic training course. She reported that both male and female peers rated women lower than men. Women also scored lower on a series of tests given at the beginning of the course measuring leadership and career potential. Mohr concluded, however, that, because these tests had been normed on male officers, the question of whether the peer ratings reflected real differences or gender bias remained unanswered.

Nieva, Mallamad, Eisner, Mills, and Thomas (1981) studied the outcome of real-world evaluations of Navy enlisted men and women being considered for advancement to chief petty officer. Concrete statements describing outstanding professional performance were positively associated with promotion, regardless of gender. However, statements describing desirable personality traits (motivation, leadership qualities, etc.) enhanced promotional opportunities for the men and suppressed them for the women. It was concluded that objective, task-oriented information requiring little interpretation by the selection board functioned in an unbiased manner and that the more subjective information about individual traits permitted prejudices to creep into the promotional process.

Navy officers are evaluated using NAVPERS 1611/1, Report on the Fitness of Officers (FitRep). This form, which is provided in Appendix A, requires reporting seniors to rate the officers being evaluated on specific aspects of performance, specialty skills, contributions to the command's mission, personal traits, etc. The final item asks raters to comment on "the officer's overall leadership ability, personal traits not listed on the reverse side, and estimated or actual performance in combat... unique skills and distinctions that may be important to career development and future assignment."

This form is revised periodically to reflect the changing emphasis in officer development and to halt temporarily the seemingly inevitable rating inflation that familiarity with a rating form breeds. Yet, as Haering (1980) noted,

It doesn't take long for the grades to cluster around the high left end again. . . The way selection or screening boards learn to live with this apparent and uniform pattern of excellence is reliance upon service reputation and, if that fails, by a search for nuances, oddities, and subtleties. These may tell a story which separates the promising officer from the merely diligent one. (p. 35)

Thus, while the FitRep requires quantitative judgments on scales intended to be objective, the critical decisions about the careers of naval officers are often based on qualitative, subjective material (i.e., the narrative provided in the comments section). Such material is vulnerable to the influence of personal biases or stereotypes, particularly when personality traits are being discussed. Moreover, there is no assurance that a well-written, unbiased evaluation will be interpreted without regard to gender when the task of the reader is to infer the significance of subtleties.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is gender bias in the FitReps narrative material prepared for female and male officers. The focus was on the narrative material because the quantitative information is already being monitored for gender differences by the Navy Military Personnel Command. Moreover, Nieva and Gutek (1981), in their review of the civilian literature, demonstrated that "sex-related evaluation bias presents the greatest problem for successful or competent women, in situations where there is considerable ambiguity, and which involve sex-inappropriate situations or require sex-role-incongruent behaviors" (p. 81). The narrative material in the FitReps of women naval officers who are in zone for promotion to lieutenant commander (LCDR) fulfills all three of these conditions.

PROCEDURE

Hypotheses Being Tested

Based on the review of the literature and the authors' knowledge of the Navy, the following three hypotheses were developed for testing:

1. There will be no difference in the number of personality traits described for women and men. However, the traits associated with a male officer will differ from those associated with a female officer.
2. There will be no difference in the number and nature of descriptions of job-related skills, professional performance, or recommendations.
3. Leadership skills will be mentioned more frequently in the men's narratives than in those for women; management/administrative skills will be mentioned more frequently in the women's narratives.

Sample

The sample was obtained from the cohort of unrestricted line (URL) officers in year-groups 1972-1974 being considered for promotion to LCDR by the selection board that convened on 20 April 1981. It included every woman officer in the group (N = 120) and every 30th male officer (N = 119).

Data Analysis

All FitReps completed during an officer's career are available to selection boards on a single microfiche. These microfiche were obtained for the 239 members of the sample. The FitReps selected for analysis represented the most recent, regular (versus special), evaluation based on close observation of the ratee over a period of 6 or more months. Also, prior FitReps for the first 50 sample members on the roster were selected for use in the content analysis.

Content Analysis

To conduct a content analysis, units of information in narrative material must be identified and coded for later statistical analysis. As this process is somewhat subjective, objectivity is increased by developing rules for compiling and utilizing the list of descriptors, practicing on additional material to resolve differences between judges, and

refining and enlarging the list as unique information is encountered. This process continues until a satisfactory level of interrater reliability is achieved (.80 or higher) and unique descriptors are no longer being found. Then the actual narrative material to be analyzed is unitized and coded independently by at least two researchers.

In the evaluations of officers, seven categories of information were anticipated based on the instructions for completing Section 88 of the FitRep (BUPERSINST 1611.12E): manner of performance, personality traits, self-expression, combat performance (estimated or actual), leadership, impact on Navy/command, and recommendations (for promotion or future assignment). Content analysis of 10 of the extra 50 FitReps disclosed that two additional categories were needed: relations with others and Navy variables (associated with the naval officer role). In addition, the leadership category was expanded to include management and administrative skills.

The descriptors found in the 10 FitReps that were content analyzed were listed and assigned a code for a preliminary check on the ability of the research assistants to recognize the descriptor units and adjust to the rules. The major rules are as follows:

1. A descriptor can describe how work is performed but not the work itself.
2. When a statement contains more than one descriptor, whether a single word, phrase, or sentence, all should be counted.
3. Descriptors that are repeated are counted only once.

Twenty of the remaining extra FitReps were content analyzed to amplify the list of descriptors (the remaining 20 FitReps were not used) and provide practice for the two assistants who would be analyzing the actual data. Based on the additional information from these FitReps, synonymous words or phrases were combined for the list of descriptors.¹ In addition, the assistants' reliability in recognizing and coding units of information was checked using the following formula, taken from Guetzkow (1950), to determine consistency (U) in identifying units:

$$U = \frac{O_1 - O_2}{O_1 + O_2},$$

where O_1 and O_2 are the number of units identified by coders 1 and 2 respectively. Unlike traditional reliability coefficients, the smaller the value of U, the greater the accuracy of the coders. Scott's (1955) index of intercoder agreement (π) was used to determine content reliability:

$$\pi = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e},$$

where P_o and P_e are the observed and expected percentages of agreement respectively.

¹Words were considered in the context of the sentence in which they appeared. Moreover, care was taken to code separately similar phrases or words that have different meanings in the evaluations of naval officers. As an example, "should be promoted ahead of his contemporaries" is not the same as saying "should be promoted--now." More information on the procedure used in the content analysis may be obtained from the authors.

The final list of information categories and component descriptors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Coded Information Categories and Component Descriptors

Category/Descriptors	Category/Descriptors
<u>100 Manner of Performance</u>	<u>500 Combat Performance</u>
101 Outstanding performer	501 Would perform capably
102 Competent/knowledgeable	<u>600 Recommendations (For Promotion or Future Assignment)</u>
103 Accomplished goals	601 Shows potential for growth
104 Exercised sound judgment	602 Shows unlimited potential
105 Effective/productive	603 Recom. for promotion ahead of contemporaries
106 Professional	604 Ready for LCDR/increased responsibility
107 Completed tasks ahead of time	605 Recom. for specific assignment
108 Contributed meaningfully	606 Recom. for demanding assignment
109 Showed satisfactory growth	607 Recom. for immediate promotion
110 Praiseworthy	608 Highly recom. for promotion
<u>200 Personality Traits</u>	<u>700 Navy Variables</u>
201 Intelligent	701 Possesses Navy characteristics
202 Thorough	702 Follows rules/supports policies
203 Organized/sets priorities	703 Keeps physically fit
204 Flexible	704 Well-groomed
205 Motivated/dedicated	705 Safety conscious
206 Dependable/responsible	706 Valuable asset
207 Displays initiative	707 Has supportive spouse
208 Perceptive	708 Active in community
209 Prompt	709 Active in Navy social events, functions
210 Logical/displays common sense	710 Actively supports equal opportunity programs
211 Honest	711 Displays military bearing
212 Dynamic	712 Enhances camaraderie
213 Sociable/good-natured	713 Enhances national or international relations
214 Energetic	<u>800 Leadership and Management/Administration</u>
215 Assertive/persuasive	801 Capable leader
216 Mature/stable	802 Capable manager/administrator
217 Confident	<u>900 Impact on Navy/Command</u>
218 Creative	901 On unit readiness
219 Aggressive	902 On performance of wing, ship, command
220 Positive/optimistic	903 On retention
221 Tactful	904 On savings of time, money
<u>300 Relations with Others</u>	905 On recruiting
301 Instructive	906 On equal opportunity
302 Attentive to needs of others	907 On special programs
303 Unbiased/fair	908 On material facilities/environment
304 Assists others	909 On inspection conditions
305 Displays good counseling skills	910 On safety
306 Demanding	911 On systems
307 Developmental	912 On training
308 Displays team building skills	
309 Motivating	
<u>400 Self-expression</u>	
401 Written	
402 Oral	
403 Command of language	

Statistical Analyses

A list of descriptors (i.e., coded units) was compiled for each person in the sample. These lists were analyzed to investigate the hypotheses as follows:

Hypothesis 1. A t-test for the difference between means was computed to determine whether the same number of descriptors was used to describe the personality traits of women and men. A direct (as opposed to stepwise) discriminate analysis investigated the power of these traits to differentiate between the sexes. In addition, a separate single-linkage cluster analysis was performed for each gender using BMDP statistical software (Dixon, 1981). This analysis identified the patterns of traits clustering together for female and male officers.

Hypothesis 2. The means determined for the manner of performance, relations with others, self-expression, combat performance, recommendations, Navy variables, and impact on Navy/command categories were tested for gender differences with a two-tailed t-test. The number of times that each descriptor in these categories was used in the narrative evaluations of women and men was also compared.

Hypothesis 3. The frequency of comments about leadership and management/administrative skills was compared for women and men using the z-ratio for the difference between proportions.

Determining the Practical Implications

In addition to the content and statistical analyses, a third type of data treatment was planned, if differences between the sexes were found. The logical response to an investigation of potential bias is, "Does it matter in real-world terms?" Thus, in an attempt to answer this question, two pseudo-FitRep narratives would be developed--one typifying a female officer and the other a male officer--without using any pronouns that denote gender. These FitRep narratives would be given to a group of naval officers, LCDR and above, to determine whether one enhanced promotional opportunities more than the other. They would be developed according to the following rules:

1. Descriptors found in the significance tests or discriminate analysis to be associated with one sex more than the other would be used except when the gender reference could not be disguised.

2. The number of descriptors used in each of the nine categories would equal the mean number obtained for each gender or, if the mode were two or more units from the mean, an average of these measures. If the number of descriptors yielding gender differences within a category were less than the mean, words clustering with the significant descriptors or those having the highest frequency for the referrant gender would be added. If the number of significant descriptors were greater than the mean, those having the lowest frequency would be removed.

Efforts to replicate the tone, style, and structure of actual FitRep narratives would include taking typical comments verbatim from the evaluations for the appropriate gender, paraphrasing them as necessary, and typing the narratives on an official form.

RESULTS

Reliability of Coders

The interrater reliabilities were very high. The unitizing reliability (difference between coders in recognizing a unit of material to be coded) was .001; and the content reliability (consistency between coders in assigning coding categories to the unit), .981. Since the two research assistants who developed the descriptor list also independently analyzed the content of the narratives, most differences over ambiguous cue words appear to have been resolved during the developmental phase.

Descriptors

Number

Table 2 presents the mean number of descriptors within each category included in narratives for women and men sample members and the results of the tests for gender differences. For the categories of manner of performance, personality traits, relations with others, self-expression, Navy variables, and leadership and management/administration, there was no significant difference in the mean number of descriptors applied to each gender. However, for the categories of combat performance, recommendations, and impact on Navy/command, men had significantly more descriptors than did women. The overall means for the two groups indicate that men's narratives contained more information than did the women's; the modes indicate that the most frequently occurring FitRep for women contained 15 descriptors, compared to 20 for men.

Table 2
Mean Number of Descriptors by Category in
Women's and Men's FitRep Narratives

Information Category	Mean Number of Descriptors		t-test and Significance Level (df=237)
	Women	Men	
Manner of performance	4.66	4.77	-0.541
Personality traits	5.61	6.19	-1.554
Relations with others	1.85	2.13	-1.514
Self-expression	0.72	0.62	0.777
Combat performance	0.01	0.08	-2.409*
Recommendations	3.26	3.66	-2.496*
Navy variables	2.58	2.41	0.684
Leadership and management/ administration	0.65	0.70	-0.515
Impact on Navy/command	1.64	2.13	-2.993**
Overall mean	20.97	22.70	11.107***
(Mode)	(15)	(20)	

*p<.05.

**p<.01.

***p<.001.

Nature

Table 3 lists the descriptors used more frequently in the evaluations of one gender than the other. The majority of the differences favored men (negative z-ratio). In the Navy variables category, 6 of the 13 descriptors showed gender differences; and in the impact on Navy/command category, 3 of the 12. Significantly more male officers than female officers were described as displaying Navy characteristics, having a supportive spouse, keeping physically fit, and having a positive impact on unit readiness, material facilities, and safety. Significantly more women than men were described as supporting equal opportunity principles, being well-groomed, and being a valuable asset to the command. For three categories--manner of performance, relations with others, and recommendations--only one descriptor showed significant gender differences. Finally, for the personality traits category, four descriptors showed significant differences.

Table 3
Descriptors in FitRep Narratives Yielding
Significant Gender Differences

Category	Descriptor (code number)	Frequency		z-ratio
		Women	Men	
Manner of Performance	Competent/knowledgeable (102)	87	103	-2.696*
Personality Traits	Logical/displays common sense (210)	15	28	-2.224*
	Dynamic (212)	8	21	-2.404*
	Mature/reliable (216)	17	37	-3.135**
	Aggressive (219)	18	39	-3.225**
Relations with Others	Instructive (301)	22	50	-3.993***
Recommendations	Recommended for specific assignment (605)	47	79	-4.219***
Navy Variables	Actively supports Navy Equal Opportunity Programs (710)	68	41	3.454***
	Well-groomed (704)	37	21	2.379*
	Valuable asset (706)	35	21	2.104*
	Possesses Navy characteristics (701)	17	30	-2.150*
	Keeps physically fit (703)	15	34	-3.084**
	Has a supportive spouse (707)	0	15	-4.029***
Impact on Navy Command	On unit readiness (901)	8	27	-3.324***
	On material facilities (908)	9	23	-2.498*
	On safety (910)	6	20	-2.728**

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

***p < .001.

Because recommendations for a specific assignment (605) are considered to be indicators of the overall potential of the officer being rated, this descriptor was analyzed further to determine the types of recommendations made for each gender. As shown in Table 4, 37 of the men were recommended for command, probably the most important tour a naval officer can have at this stage of his/her career, compared to only 8 of the women. By contrast, almost equal numbers of both sexes were recommended for assignment to a service college. Such a recommendation accounted for half of all those made for women. Men's recommendations tended to be more oriented toward professional development as a naval officer.

Table 4
Recommendations for Specific Assignments Appearing in
Men's and Women's FitRep Narratives

Recommended Assignment	Frequency	
	Women	Men
Command	8	37
Service college	27	30
Specific assignment (recruiter, instructor, management)	10	18
Specific Navy course (LMET, SWOS, test pilot)	4	12
Department head	1	10
Executive officer	2	7
Tour in specialty/staff	2	3
Total number of recommendations	54	117

Note. Totals exceed the totals of women and men who received recommendations for a specific assignment (47 and 79 respectively) because persons were sometimes recommended for more than one assignment. This was true for 38 men, compared to only 7 women.

Table 5 presents the results of a direct discriminate analysis conducted to investigate whether any of the personality descriptors differentiated between women and men. As shown, there were significant differences in four descriptors: aggressive, mature/stable, logical/display common sense, and tactful. The discriminate function coefficients showed that the first three descriptors, which were identified by Broverman et al. (1972) as descriptive of the average man, were used to describe male officers. The last descriptor is a warmth-expressiveness characteristic, which Broverman et al. and this discriminant analysis found to be descriptive of women.

Table 5
Personality Descriptors in FitRep Narratives Discriminating
Between Male and Female Officers

Descriptor	Wilk's Lambda	Univariate F	p
Aggressive (219)	.95652	10.770	.0012
Mature/stable (216)	.95905	10.120	.0017
Logical/displays common sense (210)	.98064	6.249	.0131
Tactful (221)	.97431	4.678	.0316

df = 1237.

The cluster analyses performed to identify the patterns of traits clustering together in the narratives for men and women are shown in Figure 1. The primary, strongest clusters are formed from traits with the highest correlations; and secondary clusters, from traits with decreasing correlations. For women, the descriptors included in the primary cluster were initiative, sociable, tactful, logical, and intelligent; those included in the secondary cluster were energetic, assertive, and confident. For men, the descriptors included in the primary cluster were aggressive, assertive, perceptive, initiative, and motivated; three descriptors, mature, sociable, and dependable, formed another, separate cluster. As anticipated, the strengths of association were low, since the clustered traits were key words, representing many similar words (up to 19).

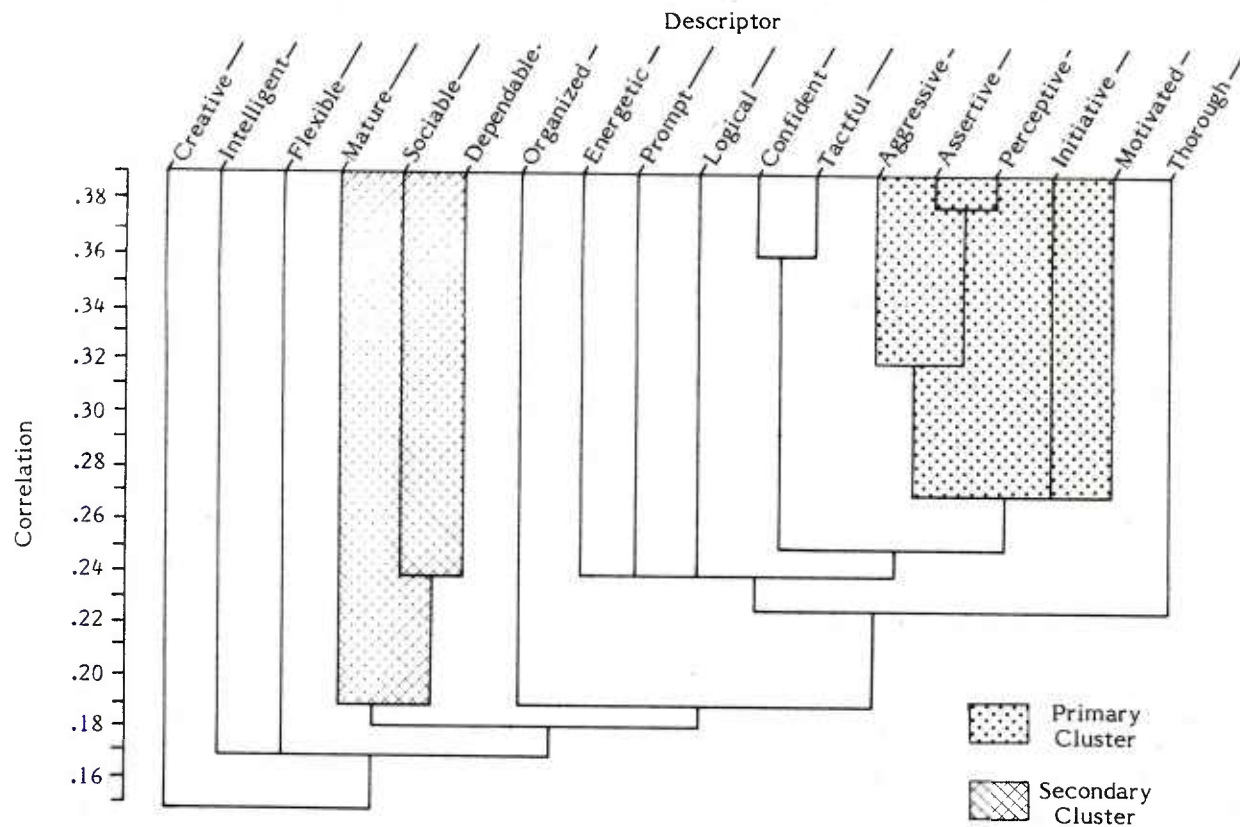
The differences in the male and female patterns are interesting. For example, for men, confident was linked to tactful; for women, confident was linked to assertive. Also, the descriptors making up the primary clusters for the two genders are very different. Those in the women's primary cluster, with the exception of "initiative," are thinking/feeling descriptors; those in the men's primary cluster, with the exception of "perceptive," are competitive/active descriptors. The secondary clusters for both men and women consist of cross-sex descriptors.

Evaluation of Leadership and Management/Administration

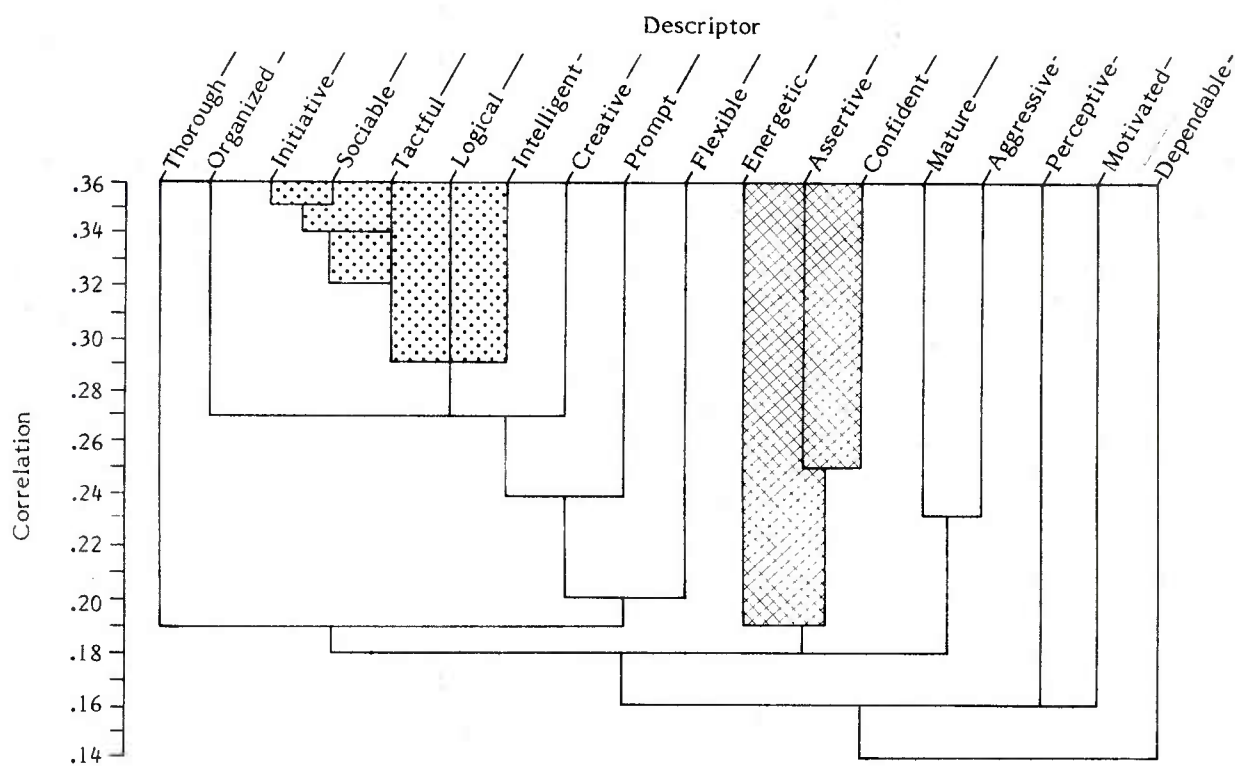
It was hypothesized that leadership behavior or potential would be discussed more often for the men than for the women and management/administrative abilities would be emphasized more for the women than for the men. Table 6 presents the frequencies of these descriptors and the results of the one-tailed test for gender differences. While the results are in the expected direction, only the gender difference for leadership was significant.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 was supported by the data. There was no difference in the number of personality traits discussed in the narrative evaluations of women and men, but the nature of these traits differed. Men, more so than women, were described as logical, dynamic, mature, and aggressive.



a. Clusters for male officers.



b. Clusters for female officers.

Figure 1. Results of single-linkage cluster analysis of personality traits in officer FitReps.

Table 6

Comparison of the Use of Leadership and Management/Administration
Descriptors in Women's and Men's FitRep Narratives

Descriptor	Frequency		z-ratio
	Women	Men	
Leadership	57	70	-1.756*
Management/administration	21	15	1.0589

*p < .05.

Hypothesis 2 was partly supported. The frequency with which descriptors of performance, relations with others, self-expression, and unique Navy variables were discussed in the FitRep narratives of women and men did not differ. The men's evaluations, however, provided more information about their anticipated performance in combat and the impact of their efforts on the Navy than did the women's. In addition, more specific recommendations and a greater number of recommendations were made in men's narratives than women's.

The nature of the descriptors appearing in some categories also differed. More male than female officers were described as being competent, effective in training others, marked by Navy characteristics, and physically fit, and as having a spouse who is an asset to their career. More women than men were described as supporting equal opportunity programs, appearing impeccable in their uniforms (well groomed), and being an asset to the command.

Hypothesis 3 was supported. Leadership skills were mentioned significantly more frequently in the men's narratives than in the women's; and management/administrative skills, more frequently (not significant) in the women's.

Impact on Selection Boards of Differential Evaluations

Based on the results of the statistical analyses, two pseudo-FitRep narratives were written. Each included words found to describe the traits or performance of one sex more than the other,² as well as those used frequently in the evaluations of both sexes. The FitRep written for the male officer referred to LT Brown; and that written for the female officer, to LT Smith. Also, instructions were prepared advising the pseudo-selection board members that both officers were highly qualified but only one could be recommended for promotion. The instructions and the two pseudo-FitRep narratives appear in Appendix B.

The narratives were tested by asking 20 officers, lieutenant commander through captain, attending the Navy's prospective commanding officer/prospective executive officer (PCO/PXO) class in Coronado, California to review them and recommend one

²Reference to a spouse who is an asset was not included in the male protocol because of gender specificity.

officer for promotion. Based on the comments of these officers, all of whom would have promoted LT Brown, three minor changes were made to the narratives. These changes were needed because some of the respondents had been influenced by nonstimulus words. Next, the amended pseudo-FitRep narratives were given to another PCO/PXO class and to students at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. These experienced Navy officers would have overwhelmingly recommended LT Brown for selection to lieutenant commander, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Promotion Recommendations of Navy Officers
Based on Two Pseudo-narratives

Sample	Officer Selected for Promotion	
	LT Brown (male)	LT Smith (female)
Postgraduate students (N = 53)	46	7
PCO/PXO class (N = 14)	12	2
Total	58	9

The comments written by these naval officers revealed the rationale for their choice. The more cogent ones are quoted in the following sentences:

The operative adjectives in LT Brown's comments convey power, ability, forcefulness, and leadership. In addition to getting the job done well, he leads, maintains an example (physical fitness).

The words mature, aggressive, dynamic (Brown's) are more important in senior leadership positions than bright, personable, and outgoing (Smith's).

It is likely that Brown is male and Smith female--note the circled feminine qualities praised in Smith's report and masculine on Brown's even though use of gender pronouns has been scrupulously avoided. Brown's report also recommends PG school and positions of increased responsibility whereas Smith's does not. Smith is represented as a good "team player," while Brown is presented as a good "team leader."

The last comment was written by one of the six women officers in the sample, who had circled certain words in both FitRep narratives. She was obviously well in tune with the descriptors appearing in the narratives of Navy women.

Altogether, 48 of the 58 officers choosing LT Brown explained their choice, as did 5 of the 9 choosing LT Smith. The most frequently cited reasons for judging the male's narrative superior to the female's was the presence of phrases describing the impact of individual effort on the command and of specific recommendations. As one officer stated, "Brown's report describes an apparent push to get work done, while Smith's

information does not suggest personal effort for improvement. Smith's success might be a halo of his/her troops doing a good job." Another officer keyed on the "flowery although nice descriptive comments for Smith. It seems the writer either unintentionally or purposely left out the specifics of the how done and results." Broverman et al. (1972) pointed out that such omissions could be indicative of stereotypical thought processes; that is, evaluators neglect to mention behavior subconsciously considered as masculine. The few officers who chose LT Smith felt that her FitRep narrative was superior because it was more succinct, more general, and described a "manager par excellence."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation demonstrated that there are differences in the words used to evaluate the performance of female and male officers--differences not only in the content of the evaluations but also in the amount of information imparted. Some of the differences are understandable. Since women are not permitted to serve on combatant ships, there seems to be little reason to address their anticipated performance in combat. Also, since many are not assigned to operational commands, their efforts are less apt to have an impact on unit readiness, material facilities, and safety. Other differences, however, are hard to justify (see Table 3): Are women really less competent, logical, and mature, yet more valuable to their command than are men? Is their personal appearance in uniform more impeccable, while they exhibit less pride in the Navy than do the men? Does their performance warrant few recommendations and only nebulous praise? It is difficult to believe these findings reflect the performance of women naval officers.

The potential effect of gender-specific performance evaluations is disturbing. Male officers of the appropriate rank to sit on selection boards overwhelmingly judged the composite narrative of men to be more career enhancing than was that of women. Since the narratives had no reference to gender, these evaluators might have modified their judgments to accommodate the restricted opportunities available to female officers had they known which officer was a woman. Regardless of the cognitive adjustments, there is no doubt that "LT Brown" is of more value to the Navy than "LT Smith." Thus, when the number of qualified eligibles exceeds the number to be selected, women likely will be passed over, once any imposed quotas are satisfied.

The officers who were debriefed after participating in the forced-choice scenario were genuinely concerned about the outcome. They acknowledged that the descriptors in the woman's narrative were consistent with those they used. Recognizing the strong influence that the lack of specific duty recommendations for the woman had on their decision, they began to question what might have been said to increase her chances of selection. Very few knew what assignments would enhance a woman's career.

In the opinion of the authors, the comments appearing in women officers' FitRep narratives are not evidence of bias on the part of those preparing the reports. Instead, it appears that male evaluators think of women as cast from a traditional mold and have difficulty viewing them in active, competitive roles. They use "generic, canned" adjectives and phrases, as one officer described the comments on the woman's FitRep, because they are not sure of what to say. While such words would be written to damn male officers with faint praise, it is believed that no malice toward female officers is intended. Moreover, the failure to make specific recommendations probably reflects a lack of information about the career progression of woman line officers, not a desire to

limit their opportunities. Selection boards, however, interpret this omission as lack of potential. Haering (1980), in discussing effective writing of FitRep narratives stated:

The final paragraph (of the Fitness Report) summarizes your recommendations on the officer and what you believe to be his ultimate potential. Promotion potential, command capacity, and future duty recommendations are obligatory unless, as stated previously, you desire a weak or harmful report. (p. 37) (underlining added)

Fortunately, the real men and women whose FitRep narratives were analyzed for this investigation were not selected for promotion to lieutenant commander by the same board. Perhaps unfortunately, their successors are. Women are unlikely to be penalized by the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act during these first few years of its existence, because careful attention is being paid to the proportions of each gender promoted under the new system. However, it is just a matter of time before such concern wanes and the full impact of differential evaluation is felt--unless remedial steps are taken to ensure that naval officers are evaluated on their performance, not on their gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If male and female officers are not being consciously and deliberately evaluated differently, this practice should be relatively easy to change by, for example, making people aware of what it is they are and are not saying about women. In addition, male officers need to become informed about the opportunities available for mid-level and senior female line officers. Women can assume command and performance evaluations are used in the selection of the limited number who will have the opportunity to do so. Commanding officers must be made to realize that, by neglecting to recommend a deserving woman officer for command, they are profoundly affecting her career. In addition, they need to apply the skills they have learned in evaluating men to evaluating women. To achieve these changes, the following recommendations are made:

1. Curriculum in officer accession schools such as OCS, AOCS, and NROTC should include FitRep writing with emphasis on areas where biases can be inadvertently written in.
2. Conduct briefings for the commanding officers and their teaching staffs at the Navy schools where officers are trained in personnel management on the results of this investigation and suggest adding a section to the curriculum on writing FitRep narratives for all officers with attention to female officers. The most critical location for this briefing is the Surface Warfare Officer School in Newport, Rhode Island, where guidance in writing FitReps is included in the curriculum of the PCO/PXO and Department Head courses. Other relevant sites are the Leadership, Management, Education and Training School and the Naval Postgraduate School.
3. Write short articles for publications, such as Prospectives, U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, and Defense Management Journal, to reach and influence officers who have already passed through the formal Navy training system.
4. Promulgate more effectively than now, information about career paths for women officers. Ensure that this information is directed toward all officers, not solely toward women.
5. Until the results of these efforts have had the opportunity to affect the evaluations of women officers, selection boards should be advised regarding gender differences in FitRep narratives.

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APPENDIX A
SAMPLE REPORT ON THE FITNESS OF OFFICERS

REPORT ON THE FITNESS OF OFFICERS

1. NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE)		2. GRADE		3. DESIG		4. SSN	
5. ACOUTRA/TEMAC		6. UIC		7. SHIP/STATION		8. DATE REPORTED	
OCCASION FOR REPORT		10. DETACHMENT OF REPORTING SENIOR		11. DETACHMENT OF OFFICER		PERIOD OF REPORT	
9. PERIODIC						12. FROM: 13. TO:	
TYPE OF REPORT		15. CONCURRENT		16. SPECIAL		BASIS FOR OBSERVATION	
14. REGULAR				17. OPS CDR		18. CLOSE 19. FREQUENT 20. INFREQUENT	
21. EMPLOYMENT OF COMMAND (CONTINUED ON REVERSE SIDE OF RECORD COPY)							22. DAYS OF COMBAT
23. REPORTING SENIOR (LAST NAME, FI, MI)		24. TITLE		25. GRADE		26. DESIG. 27. SSN	
28. DUTIES ASSIGNED (CONTINUED ON REVERSE SIDE OF RECORD COPY)							
SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE (TYPE IN OCR CODE LETTER FROM WORK SHEET)							
29. GOAL SETTING & ACHIEVEMENT		30. SUBORDINATE MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT		31. WORKING RELATIONS		32. EQUIP & MATERIAL MANAGE.	
						33. NAVY OR GAN. SUPPORT	
34. RESPONSE IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS		35. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY		36. SPEAKING ABILITY		37. WRITING ABILITY	
WARFARE SPECIALTY SKILLS (FROM OCR WORK SHEET)							
38. SEAMANSHIP		39. AIRMANSHIP		40. WATCH STANDING		41. 42. 43.	
44. SUBSPECIALTY CODE		REQUIRED BY BILLET		UTILIZATION		(WORK SHEET CODE)	
		45. YES 46. NO		47. FREQUENT 48. INFREQUENT		49. NONE 50. PERFORMANCE	
MISSION CONTRIBUTION		NOT OBS.		HIGH		MID LOW	
51. EVALUATION						MARG. UNSAT*	
52. SUMMARY							
TREND OF PERFORMANCE							
53. FIRST REPORT		54. CONSISTENT		55. IMPROVING		56. DECLINING*	
DESIRABILITY (TYPE IN OCR CODE FROM WORK SHEET)							
57. COMMAND		58. OPERATIONAL		59. STAFF		60. JOINT/OSD 61. FOREIGN SHORE	
RECOMMENDATION FOR PROMOTION							
62. EARLY		63. REGULAR		64. NO*		RANKING FOR EARLY PROMOTION	
						65. NUMBER RECOMMENDED 66. RANKING	
PERSONAL TRAITS (TYPE IN OCR CODE FROM WORK SHEET)							
67. JUDGMENT		68. IMAGINATION		69. ANALYTIC ABILITY		70. PERSONAL BEHAVIOR 71. FORCEFULNESS 72. MILITARY BEARING	
73. 74. 75. 76.							
WEAKNESSES DISCUSSED?							
77. NONE NOTED		78. YES		79. NO*		STATEMENT 80. NOT DESIRED 81. ATTACHED	
82. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER EVALUATED: (IAW BUPERS INST. 1611-12-SERIES). "I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE SEEN THIS REPORT, HAVE BEEN APPRISED OF MY PERFORMANCE AND RIGHT TO MAKE A STATEMENT."							
83. DATE FORWARDED 84.							
85. SIGNATURE OF REPORTING SENIOR							
86. DATE FORWARDED							
87. SIGNATURE OF REGULAR REPORTING SENIOR ON CONCURRENT AND CONCURRENT/SPECIAL REPORT							

21. EMPLOYMENT OF COMMAND (Continued)

28. DUTIES ASSIGNED (Continued)

88. COMMENTS. Particularly comment upon the officer's overall leadership ability, personal traits not listed on the reverse side, and estimated or actual performance in combat. Include comments pertaining to unique skills and distinctions that may be important to career development and future assignment. A mark in boxes with an asterisk (*) indicates adversity and supporting comments are required.

APPENDIX B

**FITREP NARRATIVES FOR "LT BROWN" AND
"LT SMITH" WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR JUDGES**

INSTRUCTIONS

You are a member of a lieutenant commander selection board. All of the candidates are so highly qualified that the enclosed two Fitness Reports are the only ones requiring a real decision. Your task is to recommend only one of these lieutenants for promotion. The assumptions you will operate under are that both of these URL officers are in zone for the first time and a review of their previous FITREPS has indicated that their assignments and performance in the Navy have been roughly parallel. The performance data and trends, rankings, and recommendations on front sides of their FITREPS are identical, so the only information you have to work with is in the narrative section.

Read the enclosed comments for the two candidates and make a judgment. Indicate your own rank below and whom you would recommend for selection to LCDR. Explaining your decision will be helpful.

My
Rank _____ Gender _____

I would recommend LT _____

LT Smith's performance has been superlative. As Administrative Officer of the
101
Submarine Base, LT Smith has had to deal with complex civilian and military personnel
situations and has done so with the upmost of tact and professionalism. Being responsible
221 106
for a multitude of unrelated, yet important duties, this self-starter demonstrated the
207
ability to establish sound priorities and to exercise the initiative it takes to get the job
203 207 (R)
done in a timely manner. LT Smith has been instrumental in aiding the division efforts
103 207 (R) 902
and has earned praise from superiors for having had a positive impact on the unit's
110 902 (R)
performance.

LT Smith is truly receptive to others, displaying a genuine concern for their welfare.
302 302 (R)
Along these lines, the LT is a firm supporter of the Navy's EO Program and its principles.
710

LT Smith is a bright, personable, and outgoing officer whose impeccable appearance
201 213 213 (R) 704
and articulate manner are a welcome addition to any group function and an asset to the
402 706
Navy. LT Smith is an outstanding naval officer and is highly recommended for
101 (R) 608
accelerated promotion to LCDR.
603

Notes.

1. This narrative was typed on an official evaluation form without the code numbers and underlining.
2. The underlined words represent the units or descriptors; and the numbers, the codes assigned.
3. Descriptors that have been used before are identified by R and were not counted again.

LT Brown has performed in a superlative manner as Administrative Officer of the Submarine Base. Mature, aggressive, and dynamic, Brown is an extremely forceful officer who carries out duties effectively.

A true leader, Brown takes hold of a job and handles it with skill and technical know-how. Written work is always succinct, cogent, and presented as an excellent finished product. A self-starter, LT Brown has taken the initiative to upgrade the working environment of the Division and has done a remarkable job. Also, under LT Brown's leadership and direction, the Division has shown a notable improvement in the condition of material facilities. LT Brown earns the respect of co-workers, subordinates, and higher-ups alike and is recognized as a true professional. Always sensitive to the needs of others, Brown has provided information necessary to teach others about opportunities available in the Navy and to direct them towards higher productivity. As a result of Brown's hard work and logical reasoning, the unit's standing and readiness has improved considerably.

LT Brown is in top physical condition, maintains a rigorous exercise and fitness program, and is well-suited in character and temperament to naval life. This dedicated officer is highly recommended to a position of increased responsibility, accelerated promotion and to post graduate school.

Notes.

1. This narrative was typed on an official evaluation form without the code numbers and underlining.
2. The underlined words represent the units or descriptors; and the numbers, the codes assigned.
3. Descriptors that have been used before are identified by R and not counted again.

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Commander Training Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Commanding Officer, Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Center, Pacific
Commanding Officer, Fleet Combat Training Center, Atlantic
Commanding Officer, Fleet Combat Training Center, Pacific
Commanding Officer, Fleet Training Center, San Diego
Commanding Officer, Human Resource Management Center, London
Commanding Officer, Human Resource Management Center, Norfolk
Commanding Officer, Human Resource Management Center, Pearl Harbor
Commanding Officer, Human Resource Management Center, San Diego
Commanding Officer, Human Resource Management Center, Washington
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